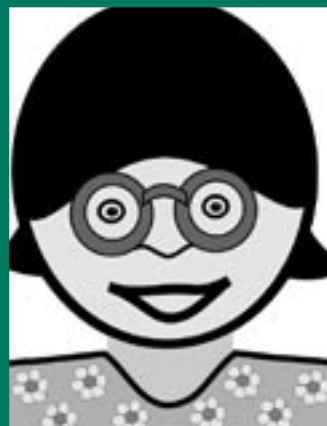


Educating Your Community

About

Vision in Children and Adolescents



Tips and Tools for
Making Vision a Health Priority



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health
National Eye Institute



Educating Your Community About Vision in Children and Adolescents

Tips and Tools for Making Vision a Health Priority

This handbook is for people who want to help promote eye health education in their communities. It contains:

- Facts about vision in children and adolescents
- Activity suggestions
- Promotional materials
- Reproducible brochure.

This handbook is part of the Healthy Vision 2010 Toolkit. See the inside back cover for more information about the toolkit.

This handbook is from the National Eye Institute (NEI), the lead agency for Healthy Vision 2010. The NEI conducts and supports research that leads to sight-saving treatment and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness. The NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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Welcome to Healthy Vision 2010

Vision problems can keep children and adolescents from doing their best in school, sports, and social activities. Most vision problems can be corrected with early detection and treatment.

Reducing blindness and visual impairment in children and adolescents aged 17 years and under is an objective of Healthy Vision 2010. Healthy Vision 2010 is one component of Healthy People 2010, a comprehensive framework for improving the health of our Nation, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

You can play an important role in helping to reduce visual impairment in children and adolescents by sharing the messages and materials in this Handbook with children and adolescents and their parents, friends, mentors, role models, coaches, teachers, caregivers, and others who influence them.

Some suggestions for using the materials in this Handbook include the following:

- ❖ Cut out, copy, and distribute the brochure, newsletter article, and print public service announcements (PSAs) at sports centers, after-school programs, and parent-teacher conferences.
- ❖ Include the newsletter article and PSAs in programs at your school or the publications, Intranet, or Website of your organization.
- ❖ Record the radio PSAs and play them on your stadium, school, or business audio system; on-hold line; or radio station.

- ❖ Read the suggestions in the “Help Reduce Blindness and Visual Impairment...” section to see other ways that your organization or business can become part of a community-wide effort to reduce visual impairment in children and adolescents.

Learn how others are helping. Get the most current information and materials and report your activities at www.healthyvision2010.org. This Website is updated regularly.

Thank you for giving your time and talents to the important effort of helping reduce visual impairment in children and adolescents. Best wishes for your success.

Help Reduce Blindness and Visual Impairment in Children and Adolescents Aged 17 Years and Under

Vision problems in children and adolescents can cause difficulty with learning, communicating, social activities, and sports. Left untreated, vision problems can become more difficult to correct.

Improving the eye health of children and adolescents goes beyond just preventing visual impairment. It can help prevent long-term problems such as delayed development, academic underachievement, and impeded enjoyment of and participation in social activities.

Use the ideas and other materials in this Handbook to help children, adolescents, and their caregivers become more aware of potential vision problems, symptoms of vision problems, the importance of early diagnosis of vision problems, and the use of protective eyewear to prevent injury. Use the suggestions individually or as part of a community-wide program. Whatever you do will help children and adolescents see their best.

To learn how local chapters of national ophthalmological, optometric, professional, or voluntary organizations are already working to develop community-wide activities and programs in your area, and to get the latest information about visual impairment



in children and adolescents, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org.

Answering the following questions will help you plan and carry out activities that will benefit the eye health of children and adolescents in your community.

Who can benefit from information about reducing vision impairment in children and adolescents?

Vision problems can keep children and adolescents from doing their best in school, sports, and social activities. Most vision problems can be corrected with early detection and treatment.

The suggested activities below will help you decide how you can work within your own environment or with other organizations and community leaders to help reduce visual impairment in children and adolescents.

Community health and eye care professionals can take the lead.

- ❖ Encourage local health-education representatives to incorporate eye health messages for children and adolescents into their existing programs, particularly sports and recreation, health, and parent-education programs.
- ❖ Ask eye care professionals to speak about children's eye health in schools; youth service organizations; faith-based communities; and parent, civic, employee, cultural, and fraternal groups.
- ❖ Offer in-service training seminars to medical, health, and social service agencies; sports, recreation, and after-school programs; youth service and mentoring organizations; and faith-based communities to teach the people who

influence children and adolescents the skills for preventing eye injury and for observing signs of vision problems.

- ❖ Record the eye health PSAs in this Handbook to play for callers who are put on hold at schools, recreation departments, health care centers, clinics, and hospitals.
- ❖ Post eye health and safety posters about children and adolescents in waiting areas at health care centers, clinics, hospitals, school nurse offices, and in recreation and school athletic facilities.
- ❖ Enlarge the print PSAs in this Handbook to use as posters, or check www.healthyvision2010.org for other materials.
- ❖ Provide copies of the brochure in this Handbook to places where children and their parents, friends, and mentors work, worship, gather, socialize, or obtain health information.

Young people can learn eye health and safety skills and teach others.

- ❖ Use photographs of students who wear glasses when you develop promotional and informational materials such as your school newspaper, event posters, yearbooks, and school playbills.
- ❖ Be sure that pictures of people participating in shop or industrial classes or sports are wearing the appropriate protective eyewear.
- ❖ Host a “Healthy Vision Is SPEC-tacular” event that includes eyewear to try on, pictures of celebrities and role models wearing protective and prescription eyewear, and vision screenings.

- ❖ Start a school-wide initiative to encourage healthy vision. Make posters that model ways to care for your eyes, such as using protective eyewear while playing sports and during shop class, caring for contact lenses, and not sharing eyewear. Post symptoms of possible vision problems, such as squinting or rubbing the eyes, and the message, “Are you sure you’re seeing well?”
- ❖ Set up a simple exhibit with an eye chart and a line of contrasting tape on the floor in a school hallway. Post a message such as, “Can you see the eye chart from here?” to raise awareness among the student population about vision problems.
- ❖ Be a role model. Wear protective eyewear when you play sports.
- ❖ Design a healthy vision pocket- or purse-size calendar or assignment book with a “You Look Smart in Glasses” theme. Include quotes and pictures of famous people who wore glasses, such as Ben Franklin, as well as modern role models such as Harry Potter. Be sure to observe copyright rules.

Schools and parent groups; faith-based communities; and sports, mentoring, and after-school programs can keep an eye on young people’s vision.

- ❖ Work with places of worship to include the eye health PSAs or the articles in this Handbook about children and adolescents in bulletins or newsletters. Make the brochure available after services or social events.
- ❖ Volunteer to speak at your parent/teacher/student association meeting if you are an eye care professional.
- ❖ Pass out the brochure in this Handbook at student/parent orientations.
- ❖ Invite an eye care professional to speak on “career day.”

- ❖ Have students sign the Vision Quest Pledge in this Handbook that commits them to taking care of their vision.
- ❖ Use the Healthy Vision materials for children available from the Website at www.healthyvision2010.org. Include them in activities in your health, science, and physical education classes.
- ❖ Volunteer to participate in community-wide activities to raise awareness about the eye health of children and adolescents. Design a healthy vision T-shirt for your participants to wear in a walk, marathon, or sports tournament. Other possible events include a mini-golf tournament; 5K race; basketball, softball, or baseball tournament; car wash; or bicycle ride. Be sure to wear appropriate protective eyewear.
- ❖ Make posters with eye health messages to hang in schools and community locations such as faith community centers, youth service organization centers, libraries, and recreation centers. You may want to turn designing a poster into a contest!
- ❖ Hold a vision fair. This fair can be a fun event of games with eye health messages, eye prizes, and eye health screenings and information. Include a bake sale with cakes and cookies decorated with eye themes.
- ❖ Have a “Make Children’s Vision a Health Priority” flag-raising ceremony on the first day of school or at another appropriate time. A flag could be designed (through an art contest) and raised at the city hall, a school, or another public venue with speakers and a proclamation.



- ❖ Sponsor an essay contest. Choose an eye health theme and invite local students to write an essay. Come up with a great prize such as breakfast with the mayor or another local celebrity. Themes could include, “Why Healthy Vision Is Important to Me,” “Healthy Vision Is SPEC-tacular,” “Wild About Healthy Vision,” or “See All You Can See.”

Community leaders can raise awareness.

- ❖ Issue a proclamation about the importance of children’s eye health. Have a group of children or adolescents present for the reading of the eye health proclamation. This event can stand on its own or you can create other activities to last throughout the day, week, or month. Invite local news media to cover this event.
- ❖ Distribute the brochure in this Handbook at fire and police community events, or host a protective eyewear or vision-screening event. Add local emergency numbers to the brochures.
- ❖ Obtain equipment and expertise through your cable company or the TV production class at a local college to make a PSA. The announcement could feature a local athlete and be played on a big screen television at home games.

Special events can reach new people.

- ❖ Schedule events during health observances, especially during Healthy Vision Month in May, which was established by the National Eye Institute (NEI) in 2003.
- ❖ Mayors or other public officials can volunteer to participate in a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the opening of a special eye health exhibit at your local library. Keep in mind that an adolescent’s idea of a celebrity may be different than an adult’s.

- ❖ High school clubs or art classes can volunteer to design and construct eye health banners or portable exhibits for use at community events such as local health fairs, parades, festivals, sports events, and walk-for-health events.
- ❖ Parent or athletic organizations can set up a table at the entrance gate of a sports event and pass out information related to eye health.

Employers can support employees and families.

- ❖ Use the information in this Handbook to establish an eye health information center in workplace cafeterias or health centers.
- ❖ Arrange a cooperative program with an eye health center on “Take Your Child to Work Day” or at a company picnic. An eye care professional can conduct onsite screenings, and the business can offer incentives for employees who have children requiring followup care from an eye care professional.
- ❖ Post the article included in this Handbook on your company Website.
- ❖ Publish the article in this Handbook in customer mailings and employee newsletters.
- ❖ Distribute materials that encourage employees to be sure their children are fitted for appropriate protective eyewear and use their protective eyewear for chores and sports. Remind employees to be good role models for their children by using their own protective eyewear.
- ❖ Use the materials in this Handbook as inserts to be included in paychecks and other employee communications materials.
- ❖ Post messages on your company Intranet promoting eye health for children of employees, or sponsor a vision screening.

Businesses can support community-wide efforts.

- ❖ Host a famous eyewear auction at a shopping center, community center, library, youth center, faith community center, or other public place. Local celebrities, politicians, performers, or other highly visible people can donate their eyewear.
- ❖ Include the sample article in this Handbook in employee newsletters. You could send the article with a letter signed by the mayor, Governor, or the head of your state health department.
- ❖ Put inserts with “Make Children’s Vision a Health Priority” messages into utility bills and bank statements.
- ❖ Print the PSAs in this Handbook in shopping circulars.
- ❖ Develop a placemat or tray liner design with vision activities that restaurant customers can use. Include the symptoms of visual impairment.
- ❖ Design a “Healthy Vision” sticker that you can offer to eye care professionals to give to children and adolescents who have eye exams.
- ❖ Print eye health messages on receipts, placemats, take-out food containers, and napkins.
- ❖ Record the PSAs in this Handbook to play on public audio systems.
- ❖ Develop a trifold, wallet-size calendar and “eye exam card.” Put a calendar on one side, leave the inside as a place to record health and eye exam appointments, and put the sponsoring businesses on the back.

- ❖ Invite local eye health organizations to participate in health fairs sponsored by a shopping center. If you don't already have one, it would be a great public service to have an eye health fair for children and adolescents. You could start smaller by asking an eye health business in a shopping center to set up a small exhibit or information table.
- ❖ Produce and sell novelties or T-shirts that include eye health messages about children and adolescents.

Join thousands of other businesses, employers, health centers, medical professionals, and citizens across the country in making children's vision a health priority. Every effort is helping to reduce visual impairment in children and adolescents.

Share in the Success of Healthy Vision 2010

Others can learn from the activities you develop. Report your activities to your local community organizer and visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org to share your efforts and successes. Also use the Website to learn what others are doing to help reduce visual impairment in children and adolescents. Thank you for your efforts.

Some Simple Steps

- ❖ Keep track of the following:
 - Number and type of materials distributed.
 - Number of people participating.
 - Number and type of inquiries received about vision problems, vision screenings, and eye exams for children and adolescents.
 - Increase in the number of children and adolescents who receive screenings and obtain eyewear.
 - Media coverage: Where the newsletter or stories about your event appeared.
- ❖ After the activity or event, answer the following questions:
 - What worked?
 - What challenges did you encounter?
 - What suggestions would you give others who might plan a similar activity or event?

Become a part of the national effort to reduce visual impairment in children.



Facts About Visual Impairment in Children and Adolescents Aged 17 Years and Under

Vision problems can keep children and adolescents from doing their best in school, sports, and social activities. Most vision problems can be corrected with early detection and treatment.

What is visual impairment?

Visual impairment in children and adolescents can range from problems with focusing on objects (refractive error) to vision loss caused by injury. Refractive error occurs when the eye doesn't correctly bend, or "refract," light as it enters the eye so that you can focus correctly on an object. Refractive error is a vision disorder rather than an eye disease. The refractive errors that appear most often in children and adolescents are:

- ❖ Nearsightedness (myopia): Close objects are seen clearly, but distant ones are blurred.
- ❖ Farsightedness (hyperopia): Distant objects are seen clearly, but close ones are blurred.
- ❖ Astigmatism (irregular curvature of the cornea): Vision that is like looking into a distorted or wavy mirror. Astigmatism can occur with farsightedness or nearsightedness.

What are some other vision problems that affect children and adolescents?

- ❖ Lazy Eye (amblyopia): One eye is not focusing on objects. The other eye does all the vision work. Without treatment, the unfocused eye becomes weaker and weaker and the problem becomes harder to correct.
- ❖ Misaligned eyes (strabismus): The eyes both look inward (crossed eyes) or outward, or one eye looks straight ahead while the other turns inward, outward, upward, or downward.
- ❖ Eye injuries: Injury also can cause visual impairment in children. Having your child fitted with the right protective eyewear and taking other precautions to protect your child from eye injury is another important part of your child's eye health.

Who is at risk for visual impairment?

- ❖ Any child can have visual impairment. The likelihood of visual impairment is about the same among boys and girls and across racial and ethnic groups.
- ❖ About one-quarter of children aged 12 to 17 have some type of refractive error.
- ❖ Visual impairment becomes much more common as young people go from childhood to adolescence.
- ❖ Every year, toys and home playground equipment cause more than 11,000 (mostly preventable) eye injuries in children.
- ❖ Each year, hospital emergency rooms treat nearly 40,000 victims of sports-related eye injuries.

- ❖ More than 2,000 fireworks-related eye injuries occur each year.
- ❖ According to the U.S. Eye Injury Registry, about 40 percent of eye injuries occur in the home, including the yard, workshop, and around the car.

Who needs to know about visual impairment in children and adolescents?

Children and adolescents, as well as their parents, friends, mentors, role models, coaches, teachers, caregivers, and others who influence them.

What are the symptoms of visual impairment?

Nearsightedness and farsightedness can have a number of symptoms including:

- ❖ Having trouble seeing the blackboard or other distant objects clearly
- ❖ Holding reading material closer than normal
- ❖ Skipping or confusing small words while reading
- ❖ Losing place while reading
- ❖ Squinting or frowning
- ❖ Having headaches or eye strain
- ❖ Rubbing eyes excessively
- ❖ Turning or tilting head to use one eye only.



How are vision problems detected?

- ❖ Eye examinations, as recommended by your family physician or eye care professional, can detect visual impairment as it develops. Examinations can lead to treatment that is right for a child's or adolescent's eyes and lifestyle.

Can visual impairment be cured?

- ❖ Nearsightedness, farsightedness, and other refractive errors in children and adolescents usually can be corrected with prescriptive contact lenses or eyeglasses.
- ❖ There are treatments for other visual impairments such as amblyopia.

What can I do to protect my child or adolescent from visual problems?

- ❖ Check with your eye care professional or family physician about the appropriate eye exam schedule for your child.
- ❖ Most eye injuries can be prevented with appropriate precautions and protective eyewear. Make sure your child always wears protective eyewear for sports and chores.
- ❖ Avoid eye safety hazards such as fireworks and paintball.
- ❖ Consult your eye care professional or family physician about any eye injuries as soon as they happen.



Here is an article you can put in your company or organizational newsletter or post on your company bulletin board or Intranet.

Is Your Child Seeing His or Her Best?

Does your child hold reading materials close to his or her face?

Does your adolescent squint when looking at far-away objects?

Does your child often complain about headaches while doing homework?

Does your adolescent tilt his or her head to use one eye to see?

These may be signs that your child needs an eye exam.

Vision problems can keep children and adolescents from doing their best in school, sports, and social activities. Most vision problems can be corrected with early detection and treatment.

Nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism are the most common problems for children. Lazy eye and misaligned eyes (crossed eyes or eyes wandering in different directions) are vision problems that must be treated early to prevent long-term problems.

Left untreated, vision problems can become more difficult to correct and can lead to lifelong problems, such as being unable to travel alone, not seeing well enough to do everyday tasks, and being unable to maintain employment.

Eye injuries from toys; sports; household, yard, and garden chores; home and auto repairs; and fireworks also can put your child's vision at risk. Nearly all of these injuries could be prevented with precaution or appropriate protective eyewear.

Make vision a health priority. Check with your family physician or eye care professional about eye health and eye safety for your child.

For more information about visual impairment in children and adolescents, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org, sponsored by the National Eye Institute (NEI) and the Healthy Vision Consortium.

The NEI conducts and supports research that leads to sight-saving treatment and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness. The NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Radio Public Service Announcements

Visual Impairment in Children and Adolescents

Radio PSAs:

30-second spot

“Protect Your Child’s Vision”

Station Announcer:

Children could lose more than the game if they aren’t wearing protective eyewear. They could lose their sight.

Sports injuries cause 40,000 eye injuries each year, and 40 percent of all eye injuries occur in the home. Nearly all of these injuries could be prevented with the right protective eyewear.

Protect your child’s vision. Make sure he or she uses caution and wears protective eyewear while playing sports or working with lawnmowers, cleaning supplies, and tools.

A message from [insert the name of the sponsoring organization].

30-second spot

“Watch Out for Your Child’s Vision”

Station Announcer:

Does your child have trouble seeing the chalkboard at school?

Does your adolescent hold a book closer than normal?

Does your child rub his or her eyes a lot—or skip or confuse small words when reading?

Vision problems can keep children and adolescents from doing their best in school, sports, and social activities. Most vision problems can be corrected with early detection and treatment.

Make vision a health priority. Ask your family physician or eye care professional about the signs of vision problems.

A message from [insert the name of the sponsoring organization].

30-second spot

“Is Your Child’s Vision at Risk?”

Station Announcer:

When was the last time you thought about your child’s eye health?

Your child may have a vision problem and you may not even know it. He or she may not be aware of it, either.

Vision problems can keep children and adolescents from doing their best in school, sports, and social activities. Most vision problems can be corrected with early detection and treatment.

Eye injuries from toys, sports, household chemicals, home and auto repairs, and fireworks also can put your child’s vision at risk.



Print Public Service Announcements

Does your child have a vision problem?



Vision problems can keep your child from doing his or her best in school, sports, and social activities. Most vision problems can be corrected with early detection and treatment.



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Does your child:

- ☐ have problems seeing the blackboard?
- ☐ hold a book closer than normal?
- ☐ rub his or her eyes a lot?
- ☐ skip or confuse small words while reading?

Vision problems can keep your child from doing his or her best in school, sports, and social activities. Most vision problems can be corrected with early detection and treatment.



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Health
and Human Services
National Institutes of
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National Eye Institute

Add your logo and copy this brochure to hand out at your events, or add an address on the back and mail it out.



For more information about vision in children and adolescents, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org.

Is Your Child Seeing His or Her Best?

Vision problems can keep children and adolescents from doing their best in school, sports, and social activities. Most vision problems can be corrected with early detection and treatment.



What are the most common vision problems among young people?

Trouble seeing things close up or far away and distorted vision are the most common problems.

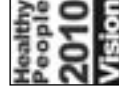
What are the symptoms of visual impairment?

Nearsightedness and farsightedness can cause a number of difficulties:

- ❖ Having trouble seeing the blackboard or other distant objects clearly



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health
National Eye Institute



- ❖ Holding reading material closer than normal
- ❖ Skipping or confusing small words while reading
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- ❖ Squinting or frowning
- ❖ Having headaches or eye strain
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- ❖ Turning or tilting head to use one eye only.

How are vision problems detected?

- ❖ Eye examinations, as recommended by your family physician or eye care professional, can detect visual impairment as it develops. Examinations can lead to treatment that is right for a child's or adolescent's eyes and lifestyle.

Can vision problems be cured?

- ❖ Nearsightedness, farsightedness, and other

refractive errors in children and adolescents usually can be corrected with prescriptive contact lenses or eyeglasses.

- ❖ There are treatments for other visual impairments such as amblyopia (lazy eye).

What can I do to protect my child or adolescent from vision problems?

- ❖ Check with your eye care professional or family physician about the appropriate eye exam schedule for your child.
- ❖ Most eye injuries can be prevented with appropriate precautions and protective eyewear. Make sure your child always wears protective eyewear for sports and chores.
- ❖ Avoid eye safety hazards such as fireworks and paintball.
- ❖ Consult your eye care professional or family physician about any eye injuries as soon as they happen.

Vision Quest Pledge

I, _____, hereby pledge not to lose sight of healthy vision.

I understand the dangers of fireworks and paintball and will not use them. I promise to use protective goggles when playing high-risk sports such as baseball and basketball, using machinery such as lawn mowers, or working with household chemicals. I will not wear contact lenses unless prescribed by an eye care professional. I promise to wear sunglasses to protect my eyes from harmful UV rays.

I understand that there are many dangers to my eyesight and promise to make eye health and safety a priority.

Signature

Date

Witness

Healthy Vision 2010 Toolkit

The Healthy Vision 2010 Toolkit is an interactive CD-ROM that includes Handbooks, the Community Action Guide, and the Speaker's Guide. These resources also are available on the Web at www.healthyvision2010.org/, and are targeted to those who want to make vision a health priority in their communities.

- **The handbooks** each focus on a different Healthy Vision 2010 objective. They include community-based activity suggestions, newspaper/newsletter articles, public service announcements, and brochures to copy and to hand out.
- **The Community Action Guide** includes a planning timeline, media materials, tips for involving your community, and more.
- **The Speaker's Guide** contains presentations to engage and inform communities about eye health. PowerPoint, Word, and Acrobat versions of each presentation, along with speaker's notes, are included. Topics include injury and safety, eye disease, vision rehabilitation, and others.

Healthy Vision 2010 Objectives

Healthy People 2010, the prevention framework of the Nation, challenges individuals, communities, and professionals to take specific steps to ensure that good health and long life are enjoyed by all. Healthy Vision 2010 refers to the vision objectives in Focus Area 28 of Healthy People 2010.

Following are the 10 vision objectives:

- 28-1 Increase the proportion of persons who have a dilated eye examination at appropriate intervals.
- 28-2 Increase the proportion of preschool children aged 5 years and under who receive vision screening.
- 28-3 Reduce uncorrected visual impairment due to refractive errors.
- 28-4 Reduce blindness and visual impairment in children and adolescents aged 17 years and under.
- 28-5 Reduce visual impairment due to diabetic retinopathy.
- 28-6 Reduce visual impairment due to glaucoma.
- 28-7 Reduce visual impairment due to cataract.
- 28-8 Reduce occupational eye injury.
- 28-9 Increase the use of appropriate personal protective eyewear in recreational activities and hazardous situations around the home.
- 28-10 Increase vision rehabilitation.
 - 28-10a Increase the use of rehabilitation services by persons with visual impairments.
 - 28-10b Increase the use of visual and adaptive devices by persons with visual impairments.

For copies and information, please visit www.healthyvision2010.org.

